

## **New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring**

**District:** Frelinghuysen Township School District

**County:** Warren

**Monitoring Date:** May 6, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Zola Mills, Michael Lee

### **Background Information:**

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Frelinghuysen Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self- assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Frelinghuysen Township School District with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.
- The protection of procedural safeguards for students and their families.
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and
- The organization and delivery of programs and services resulting in positive student outcomes.

The self-assessment was designed to identify areas of strength, promising practices, areas that need improvement and areas that may be noncompliant with state and federal requirements. The Frelinghuysen Township School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress in implementing the plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the school on April 29, 2002. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site, the NJDOE team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

### **District Strengths**

The district is commended for its many NJEA Hipp grant programs such as the most recent, "Baking with Mother Goose." It is designed to help preschool and kindergarten students feel more comfortable in their new school surroundings. The sixth grade students and senior citizens work with the younger students in combined children's literature and cooking unit. Older students benefit from helping the younger students, the

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younger ones find “older” friendly and familiar faces, and the community’s senior citizens become more familiar with and appreciative of the school community.

Parent, student and staff participation and enthusiasm are high. Parents are active members of the school community and contribute in many ways. A parent contacted Wal-Mart and received a grant to provide the “Kinder Garden ABC Planter Program.” Planters were built so that kindergarten students could plant and tend either flowers or vegetables whose name begins with every letter of the alphabet.

Another noteworthy school-wide program is Frelinghuysen EARLYACT. Students work with the Blairstown Rotary to promote goodwill, understanding and peace by carrying out monthly service projects that benefit the school and the local or global community.

The teaching staff is very creative. They extend and enrich the curricular offerings through activities such as a school wide Greek Night and a costumed Inaugural Ball.

Because music is valued in this district, a Bell Choir was formed this year in addition to the existing band activities.

### **Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**Reevaluation, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, Discipline and Transition** were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

#### **I. General Provisions**

##### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment process, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of professional/parent development. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

#### **II. F.A.P.E.**

##### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, transportation, related services of occupational, speech, transportation and physical therapy, facilities and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of counseling, length of school day/year and transfer students. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **III. Procedural Safeguards**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent and native language.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, notice of meetings, written notice, meetings and independent evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site it was determined the district has already implemented procedures to correct the identified areas and the district is now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **IV. Location, Referral, Identification**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of direct referrals, hearing and vision screenings, summer referrals, and timelines and participants for identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the referral process and health summaries for preschool youngsters with disabilities directly referred by parents to the child study team (CST). The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding Child Find.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Child Find** - During the on-site a review of child find information indicated that although Child Find activities are appropriate in press releases and letters to pediatricians and preschools, the district's Student/Parent handbook targets only ages three to five.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include a mechanism to revise the Student/Parent handbook to include child find information for students between the ages of three and twenty-one.**

### **V. Evaluation**

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### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of functional assessments. The district improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding written reports.

### **Area of Need:**

**Written Reports** – During the on-site visit, a review of assessment reports indicated that assessment dates are used as the date of the report instead of the report reflecting the date the report was developed.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure reports reflect dates they were developed, not only when the student was assessed.**

## **VII. Eligibility**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria and documentation of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern with the provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents. The district's plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

## **VIII. IEP**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of participants, considerations/required statements, implementation dates, annual review timelines and teacher knowledge/access to the IEP

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of alignment of goals and objectives to core curriculum content standards (CCCS) and ninety-day timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of concern.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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**IX. LRE**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, considerations and documentation, regular education access, and Oberti factors.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of supplementary aids/services, nonacademic/extracurricular participation and continuum. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

**XIV. Programs and Services**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes for speech and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of case management and consultation time. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

**XV. Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets, the maintenance and destruction of student records and documentation of locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of parent/adult student access to records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

**Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Frelinghuysen Township School District on May 6, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the district's

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improvement plan. The district is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify all but two areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, a number of these identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is further commended for the many areas that were determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, the two parents in attendance expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included dissemination of IDEA information, policies and procedures, extended school year, provision of the related services of occupational therapy, speech therapy and physical therapy, transportation, facilities, certification, obtaining consent, native language, direct referrals (parent/staff), summer referrals, vision/hearing screenings, participants and timelines for identification meeting, multi-disciplinary and standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, all reevaluation, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, documentation of eligibility, IEP participants, considerations/required statements, implementation dates, annual review timelines, teacher knowledge/access, individualized decision making, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation, regular education access, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three, all discipline procedures, all statewide assessment, class size/waiver, age range/waiver, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, maintenance/destruction of student records and documentation of locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, professional/parent development, the related services of counseling, length of day/year, transfer students, surrogate parents, notices of meetings, written notice, holding of meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, health summaries, functional assessments, copies of evaluation reports to parents, goals and objective aligned with core curriculum content standards, ninety day timelines, supplementary aides/services, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, case management, collaboration times, access sheets and parent/adult student access.

The on-site visit identified two additional areas of need within two standards regarding written reports and Child Find.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the two areas of need identified during the on-site visit.

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